Informational Packet

of the

THE HYPOTHETICAL NATURAL HISTORY CLUB

The Salton Sea and the Surrounding Region

The

Revised Edition

Volume

I

Welcome to The Hypothetical Natural History Club. The following informational packet will inform you of several key features of the natural history of a particular region over a span of time. All sources of information in this packet are reliable and verified. This packet covers the Salton Sea and associated region and beliefs.

You are standing on the shore of the Salton Sea. There are many falsehoods, myths and rumors associated with the most recent incarnation of this truly ancient body of water[1] and it is the goal of this informational packet to separate the scientific truth from the outright lies. This packet is written with the layperson in mind, and great effort has been undertaken to simplify some of the complexities and eliminate jargon where possible. Unlike many informational packets on this region, this packet has no political or sectarian agenda. This packet makes no attempt to force you to think a certain way. This packet is neutral.

It is true that there hasn't always been a sea here[2] and the story of its intermittent destruction and rejuvenation stretches back through geologic time. In order to understand the importance of the Salton Sea[3] we will have to trace that path of destruction and geologic carnage through the eons. This understanding will deepen your appreciation of the Geologic Doctrine of Neocatastrophism[4].

The Salton Sea is currently the largest body of water in the state of California; however the Salton Sea is not actually a sea, but an endorheic lake situated below sea level[5]. The only other occurrence of this geographic feature in California is Lake Manly in Death Valley's Badwater Basin[6]. In fact, the two endorheic basins were both completely dry at the turn of the last century and what is now the Salton Sea was known as the Salton Sink[7]. Further, there was considerable debate in the scientific community at the time as to which of these two basins was farther below sea level[8]. This debate was settled when the Great Flood of 1905 created the Salton Sea.

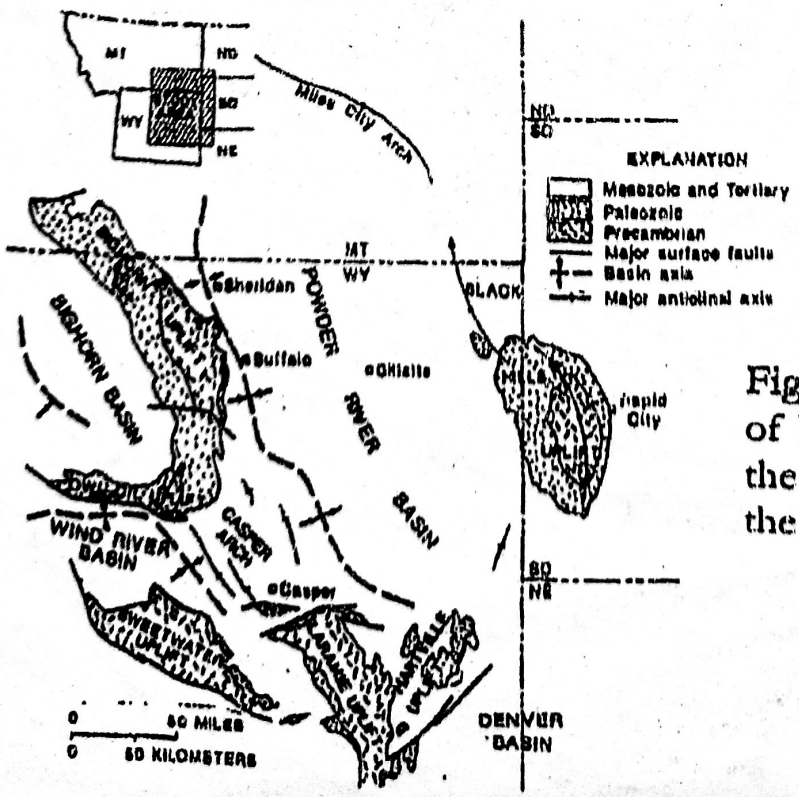


Figure 1: A photograph of Powder River Basin, Wyoming, the source of the Salton Sea. Note the shape.

In much of the literature on this region the Salton Sea has been called an "accidental sea", or an "engineering disaster", or a "mistake"[9]. None of this is true and we shall discuss intentionality of the creation of the Salton Sea farther on in this text. It is worth note that during prehistoric times this area was covered in a vast inland sea that periodically connected to the ocean[10], as evidenced by whale fossils found in the hills above Palm Springs as well as the skeletal remains of an extinct species of walrus (†*Valenictus imperialensis*). It was not until relatively recently in geologic time that the Salton Sink was totally excluded from the ocean by sediments deposited by the Colorado River. That river is so named because in historic times it ran red with silt[11] from its source near the Heart Mountain Landslide in Wyoming all the way down its 1,450 mile long march to the Gulf of California. The Colorado now crosses the international border as a thin blue stream robbed of sediments and no longer reaches its delta due to the many dams along its course[12].

Until recently it was believed that the Colorado River had taken tens of millions of years to carve the Grand Canyon, but this hypothesis has been proven false[13]. Around six million years before the present, the rift that created the Sea of Cortez started to tilt the Colorado Plateau slightly towards the south via subduction[14] of the Pacific Plate under the North American Craton. At that time the American Southwest was much wetter and covered in vast lakes, such as Lake Manly, Lake Bonneville, and Lake Lucerne[15]. One such lake was the deep watered Lake Bidahochi, in eastern Arizona. Bidahochi was situated in an endorheic basin dammed in between the Mongollon-Datil volcanic field[16] and the Kaibab Plateau. As the Greater Colorado Plateau's tilt grew more dramatic it caused Lake Bidahochi to spill over a small unnamed hill[17]. This sudden release of water behaved exactly like a large scale dam failure[18] and carved the Grand Canyon relatively rapidly. The sediments excavated by this torrent deposited a 30 foot hill across the northern end of the Gulf of California, thus excluding the Salton Sink from the ocean[19].

This small hill of excavated material from the Grand Canyon was then moved slightly north by action on the San Andreas Fault[20], which extends from the Salton Sea at the northern terminus of the East Pacific Rise to the Mendocino Triple Junction (MTJ) of tectonic plates[21]. This fault was first discovered by UC Berkley professor of geology Andrew Lawson, who famously constructed the "Lawson Adit Instructional Mine" under the Hearst Mining Building on that campus which contained the cavelike chambers used by Joseph Grinnell for his much discussed research on grizzly bears[22]. The adit (Latin, aditus: entrance) was later used during the Cold War to house equipment used to remotely detect soviet atomic bomb tests[23].

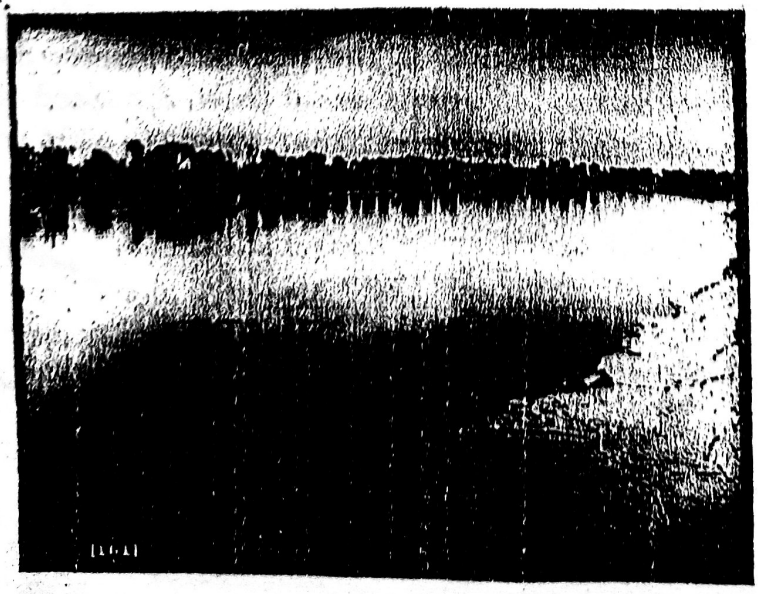


Figure 2: The Salton Sea

This southernmost section of the San Andreas Fault is home to several dormant volcanoes which appear as small hills along the shore of the Salton Sea. Among these are Red Hill, Mullet Island (now a peninsula) and Obsidian Butte. These volcanoes arose because this region is home to the thinnest section of the earth's crust anywhere on the planet[24]. Obsidian Butte is the most important of these volcanoes as it was the sole source of obsidian for Native American groups in southern California outside of the Coso Mountains[25]. It is also of some note that obsidian from this location has been used in the construction of various additions to the United States Capital Building as well as several large obelisks that have been buried across the southwest United States. The Salton Sink attained its low elevation as the Pacific and North American plates moved away from each other[26], causing a geologic feature known as a graben (German: grave) as the two plates pull apart the rift between them sinks into the earth's mantel[27]. Moreover, the lava that breached the surface in these locations has also carved an extensive cave system[28] under the Salton Sea and the surrounding desert which extends as far south as the East Pacific Rise at the southern end of the Gulf of California[29]. This volcanic cave complex is known to connect to several deep sea vents near the Sea of Cortez[30].

Over the course of time, as the Salton Graben lowered into the earth's mantel[31] the region would periodically flood with water from the Colorado River which would create a vast temporary inland lake[32]. Several incarnations are known[33]. Most recent among these was Lake Cahuilla, which was flooded sometime in the 16th century. This has not only been confirmed by carbon dating of sediment deposits on the ancient shoreline, but by the account of the lost pearl ship of 1615CE[34]. At that time Spanish explorer and pearl merchant, Juan De Iturbe, had sailed up a shallow canal from the Colorado River delta into Lake Cahuilla, which was rapidly evaporating[35]. After exploring the lake, De Iturbe couldn't locate the inlet he entered from and became stranded on a sandbar somewhere near the southern shore of the lake[36]. The De Iturbe expedition disembarked and headed for the settlement of San Diego, leaving behind their cargo of pearls[37] and looted Aztec gold[38]. On arriving in San Diego, De Iturbe claimed he had lost his ship to pirates rather than admit to intentionally scuttling the vessel due to a navigation error. The ship has since been lost and rediscovered several times. In 1774 a mule driver for the de Anza expedition[39], Tiburcio Manquerna, reportedly found the cargo of pearls[40]. Again in 1917CE a choleric Swedish farmer from El Centro claimed to have discovered the ship and looted it for a small chest of jewels[41]. He also claimed to have used wood from the ship to build his pig pens[42]. Another version of the story claims that the lost ship was of Viking origin[43].

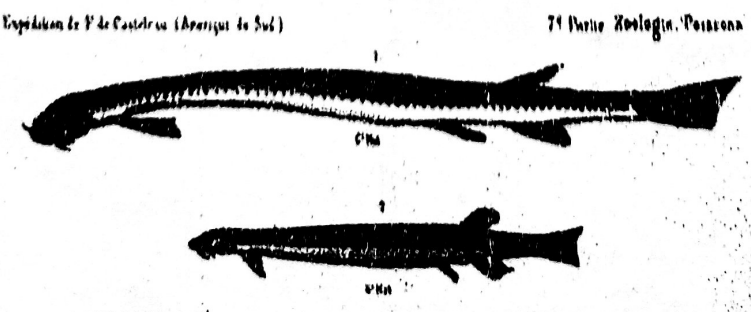


Figure 3: Don't make eye contact with this diagram

Another flood cycle of the Salton Sink occurred some 1,500 years before the present day and gave rise to a lake named Lake LeConte[44]. This version of the lake was named for an associate of Spencer Fullerton Baird, John Lawrence LeConte, who was a noted entomologist[45] known "the father of American beetle study". By the time of his death on 15 February 1894 CE, LeConte had described and named more than half of the North American insect taxa[46]. Unfortunately, more than 20,000 thousand of his preserved specimens were destroyed in a mysterious fire[47]. After the fire LeConte kept all of his specimens alive and even traveled with them and an entourage of professional beetle coddlers[48], such was his fear of losing his collection again. LeConte was accustomed to the desert and had taken several trips to Algiers and Egypt to collect rare scarab beetles prior to his expeditions along the Colorado River. Several of his specimens of *Scarabaeus sacer*, a species of dung beetle sacred to the ancient Egyptians, escaped while he was surveying the Imperial Valley[49]. These beetles naturalized in the area and thus give rise to Egyptian portmanteau naming scheme of towns in the region. For example the town of Calipatria is a portmanteau of "California" and "Cleopatra"[50], Niland is a portmanteau of "Nile" and "land"[51], and Brawley is a portmanteau of "Baal", "Ra", and "Kherty",[52] the latter being a death deity usually depicted as a mummified desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis Canadensis nelsoni*)[53]. Kherty was generally feared as "death in persona"[54] and a god that "feasts on the hearts of men"[55]. His name directly translates to "the slaughterer". Artifacts baring his name have been found as far south of Dynastic Egypt as Mafeking, in what is now South Africa[56].

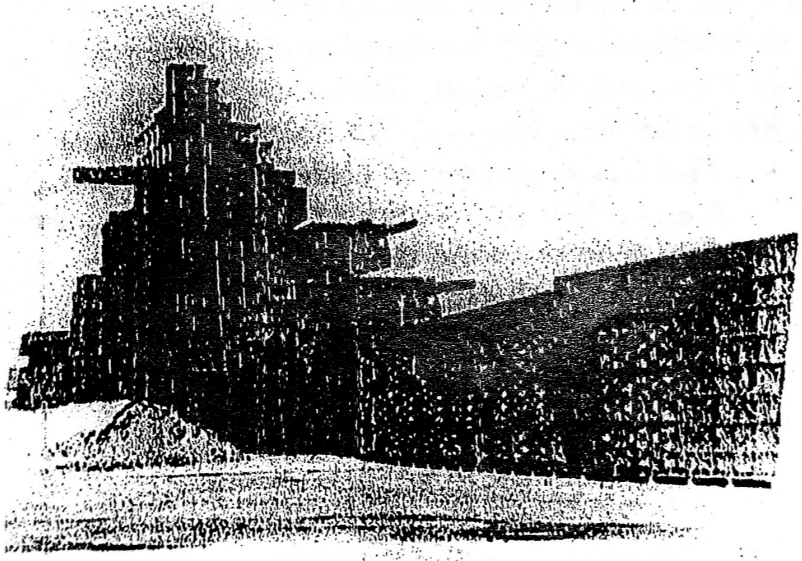
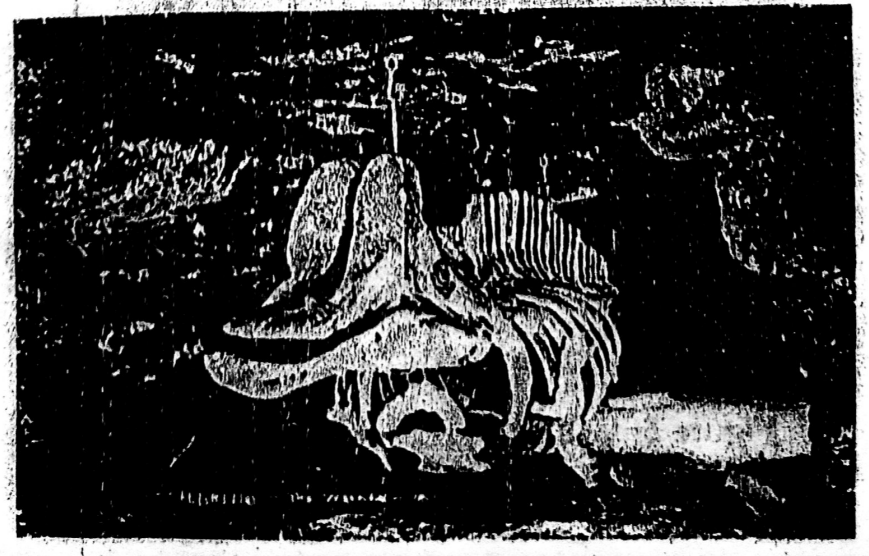


Figure 4: (Above) De Iturbe's ship, "El Tetis"

Figure 5: (Below) Caves at Travertine Point



The most archaic version of the lake yet discovered is known as the Blake Sea[57], which occurred at the end of the Younger Dryas, some 11,700 years ago[58]. This incarnation of the lake was the byproduct of glacial melt waters from the western Rocky Mountains[59]. This version of the lake was named for an associate of S. F. Baird, William Phipps Blake, who was a noted geologist[60], mining consultant and professor. William Blake had been appointed by Baird as head geologist of the Southern Pacific Railroad Expedition[61] to designate a route for the transcontinental railroad in 1853. It was on this expedition that William Blake first visited the Salton Sink[62] as well it was that Blake first noted the "bathtub ring" of an ancient shoreline in the hills above Palm Springs. Blake had a particular fascination with Travertine Point, a tufa formation south of Palm Springs[63]. According to local legend, the souls of all who die in the Imperial Valley travel to Travertine Point to escape the heat[64]. Supposedly, if one listens closely they can hear the murmurs of the dead within the extensive cave system under the formation[65]. William Blake made particular note of these voices in his report "The Imperial Valley and the Salton Sink":

The sullen Earth'
Shrunk!
Forth from the dead dust rattling bones to bones
Join: shaking convuls'd the shivring clay breathes
And all flesh naked, stands; Fathers and Friends;
Mothers & Infants; Kings & Warriors;
The Grave shrieks with delight, & shakes
Her hollow womb, & clasps the solid stem;
Her bosom swells with wild desire;
And milk & blood & glandous wine,
In rivers rush & shout & dance,
On mountain, dale and plain.
The SONG of LOS is Ended
Urizen Wept.

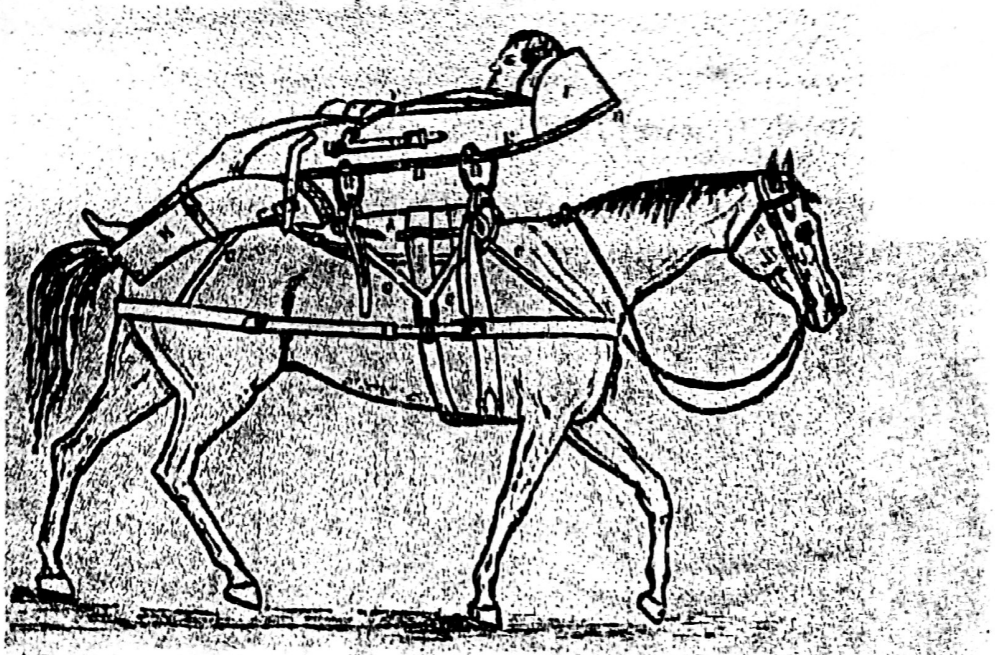


Figure 6: William Blake's horse

Blake also excavated many fossils in the region including freshwater clams (*Mulinia coloradoensis*) and a single complete skeleton of *Remingtonocetus domandaensis*, a type of "hoofed wolf" in the cetacea order[66]. It was partially because of these discoveries that William Blake developed his hypothesis that geologic processes such as mountain formation and erosion were ongoing phenomenon[67] rather than stagnant and perfectly completed historical events[68]. William Blake's hypothesis of ongoing geologic processes was also predicated on his discovery of the æolian process of wind erosion in the San Gorgonio Pass above Palm Springs, near the site of the present day wind farms. This area is the 4th or 5th windiest region in Southern California. Blake diverged substantially with the warring factions of the geologic community at the time, which consisted of two competing factions known as the Neptunist and Plutonists[69]. The Neptunists believed that all rocks were essentially formed by the residue of water from evaporated oceans or the diluvian biblical event[70] while the Plutonists believed that all rocks had been formed via volcanic action or the work of the devil[71]. Blake's Hypothesis is considered the Æolianist version of rock formation[72], in that he found that not only were some rocks sculpted by the wind, they had undergone a phase transition from a gas to a solid[73]. This process of gaseous forms passing to solids without an intermediate liquid state is known as deposition[74] and in applied geology the term refers to various ore deposits. Many of the exact details of this process have been worked out in Miasma Theory[75], which will be more extensively covered in the second volume of this informational packet[76].

Such a hypothesis greatly upset the established geologic community at the time, most of whom were Young Earth Creationists (YEC) who believed that the earth was either formed by the Christian deity or a demon known as רֹ֣אשׁ לְפִּ֑ית (Tōpel šeqer) only a few thousand years prior[77]. This cabal of geologists conspired to terminate William Blake from his professorship at the College of California in 1855. State geologist Josiah Whitney[78] is quoted in Mining Engineers of the American West as exclaiming:

"W. P. B. is now lecturing at Oakland to the College boys & they call that a Mining School?! This is the era of Mining Schools in the U. S.! Heaven save the mark!"

Figure 7: William Blake's diagram showing how the Salton Sea was formed

Because of this controversy it was as if some occult hand had banished William Blake from the University. He wandered back to Arizona through the San Gorgonio Pass in search of employment[79]. The San Gorgonio separates the Transverse Ranges, such as the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains, from the Peninsular Ranges such as the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir and the Sierra de la Giganta. Like the Cajon and Tejon passes, the San Gorgonio was carved by the San Andreas Fault[80]. This fact was overlooked by Blake.

William Blake eventually found employment with the Walnut Grove Water Storage Company as the Chief Engineer and Superintendent of the Walnut Grove Dam[81] in 1887 CE. Blake was responsible for the design and location of the dam on the Hassayampa River[82]. The river originates in the Bradshaw Mountains and converges with the Gila River near the path of the Southern Pacific Railway. Given Blake's poverty at the time, it is more likely that he would have taken the Bradshaw Trail[83] from the Mormon stronghold of San Bernardino[84] than it is that he would have taken the railroad that he helped to design. The riparian areas of the Hassayampa feature cottonwood-willow forests[85], one of the rarest and most threatened forest types in North America. Local legends tell that those who drink from the Hassayampa River can never tell the truth again. William Blake writes in his mining journal[86]:

Those who drink its waters bright-
Red man, white man, boor or knight,
Girls or women, boys or men-
Never tell the truth again
Urizen Wept.

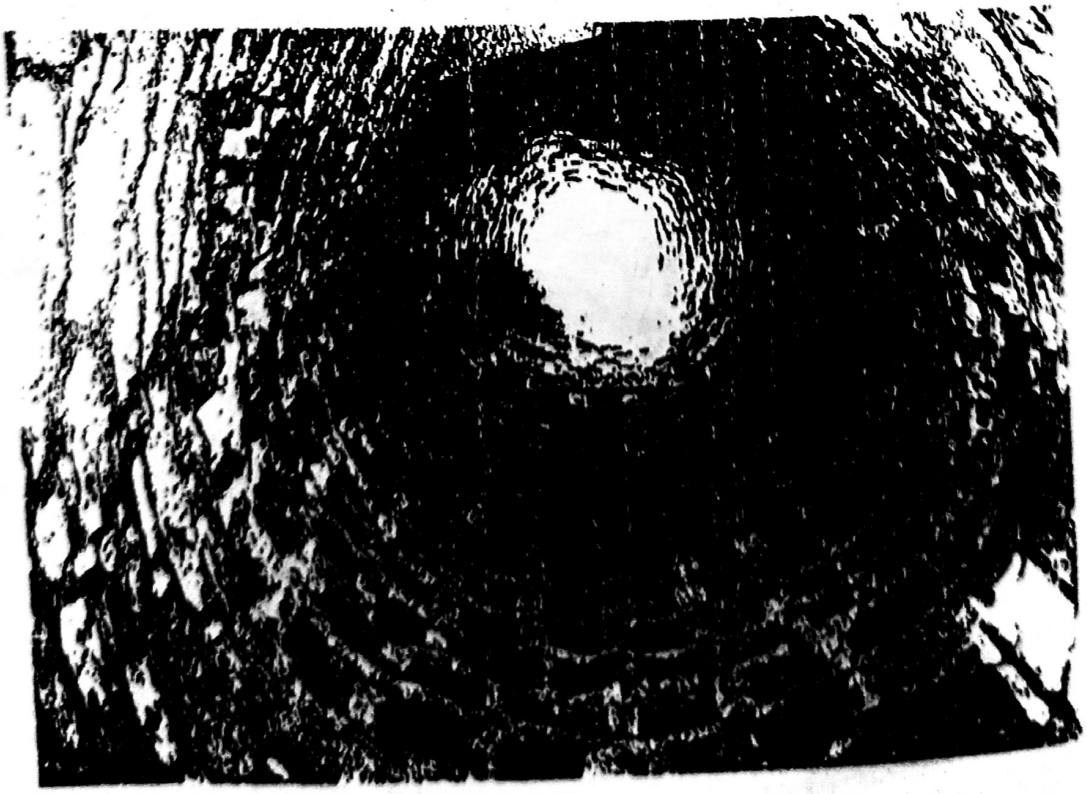


Figure 8: (Above) Tunnels under Travertine Point

Around this time William Blake was suddenly terminated from his position at the dam and he began to suffer the effects of Goldmann-Farve Disease[87], a form of severe lichen toxicosis that affects miners working with endolithic lichens[88]. It is suspected that he contracted the condition at Travertine Point in the Imperial Valley, which is a known reservoir of the disease[89]. In his hallucinations caused by the disease, Blake was known to keep a sizable population of Chuckwalla Lizards (*Sauromalus varius*) in his poorly ventilated homestead[90]. This species is also known as the "Stink Lizard"[91] due to the musky narcotic vapor that they emit when hunting small game or when threatened[92]. The vapors anesthetize all potential prey animals and are especially potent in hot weather when Chuckwallas assemble in large packs, known as hunting lounges. Humans exposed to the vapor have been known to go into a catatonic state and lose all memory of the interaction[93]. The species prefers dwelling in ancient lava flows and basaltic rocky areas with hiding places available for a retreat when threatened. These areas are typically vegetated with Creosote Bush (*Larrea tridentata*) [94] and Cholla Cacti (*Cylindropuntia fulgida*), both of which are food for the Chuckwalla.

The Cholla Cactus (*Cylindropuntia fulgida*) is an arborescent plant that often grows to heights of up to 12 feet. The leaves of the plant have been reduced to spines covered in microscopic barbs, which darken to a grey color with age[95]. These barbs tend to build up a static electric charge which can propel sections of the plant several feet towards passing animals[96]. This is why the plant is sometimes known as "Jumping Cholla". The fruits of this plant are completely sterile and the plant relies solely on vegetative reproduction[97], with transportation of the species occurring via animals that have brushed up against the plant carrying off sections of stem stuck to their flesh[98]. During droughts animals such as the Desert Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) rely on the sterile fruit for food and water. It has been speculated that the species is made up entirely of clones of a single plant[99] from somewhere in Northern Mexico and was carried to the Colorado Desert via the migration of Desert Bighorn Sheep at the end of the last ice age. The plant is also used by several species of rodents to protect their burrows[100]. The most notable of these rodent species is *Chaetodipus nelsoni*.

Figure 9: (left) The Chuckwalla Lizard (*Sauromalus varius*) can be safely eaten

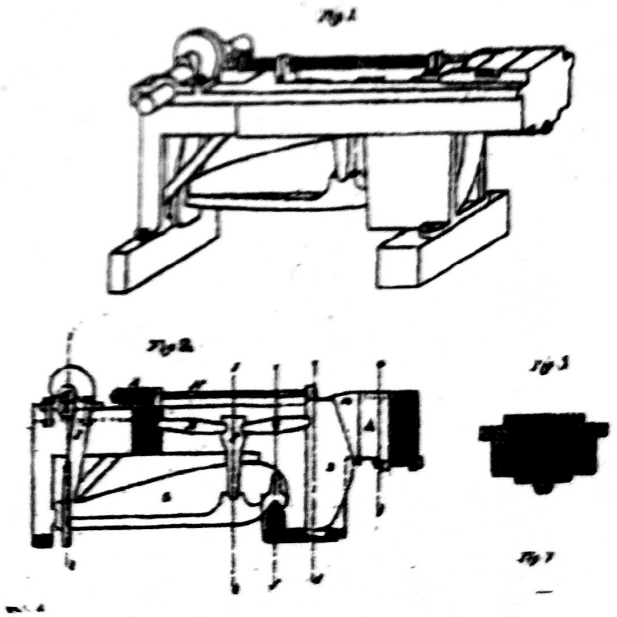


Figure 10: (right) Patent for an "Air Loom" invented by William Blake

The Cholla Cactus is the most common species of plant in the Chuckwalla Mountains[101], which mark one border of the Imperial Valley. The southern end of this range is marked by the Bradshaw Trail, an important overland route[102] to the mining districts La Paz, Arizona. Due to the many springs along the route, the trail had been extensively used for thousands of years as a trade route for Native American groups[103], especially the Chemehuevi, Desert Cahuilla and Yuma bands. One such spring is known today as Corn Spring[104], which is host to a relict population of California Fan Palms (*Washingtonia filifera*), a tree-like evergreen monocot[105]. The spring is dynamic[106], and for unknown reasons the amount of water coming to the surface has fluctuated widely over the years[107]. The source of the water is unknown – very little rain falls in the area, and the nearest body of water is the Colorado River, which is located over 40 miles to the east. It has been suggested that the spring actually connects to the vast aqueous cave system under the Salton Sea[108]. Advanced research is currently underway to study a possible tidal connection to the flow dynamics of Corn Spring.

Another interesting recent feature of the Salton Sea and surrounding region is the occurrence of a material known as adipocere[109], or corpse wax. This brownish or dirty grey soap-like substance occurs in nature when corpses decompose in warm anoxic environments with mild alkalinity[110]. The substance is incredibly resilient to decay and adipoceric human corpses are sometimes known locally as "incorruptibles". Several notable catholic saints are said to be preserved in this manner[111]. The adipocerite deposits found along the shores of the Salton Sea are chemically consistent with the hybrid tilapia fish (*Oreochromis mossambicus*)[112] which was introduced to nearby drainage canals in the 1970s CE as a mosquito control fish[113]. Today, with increased salinity levels in the Salton Sea, these hybrid tilapias are the only fish known to complete their life cycles in the lake[114]. Individuals in the Salton Sea population have been hybridized with a species of sea bream[115], known commonly as the cow bream (*Sarpa salpa*) for greater salt tolerance[116], as well as with the toothpick fish (*Vandellia cirrhosa*) for increased predator evasion[117]. These were poor choices on the part of State Vector Control officials.

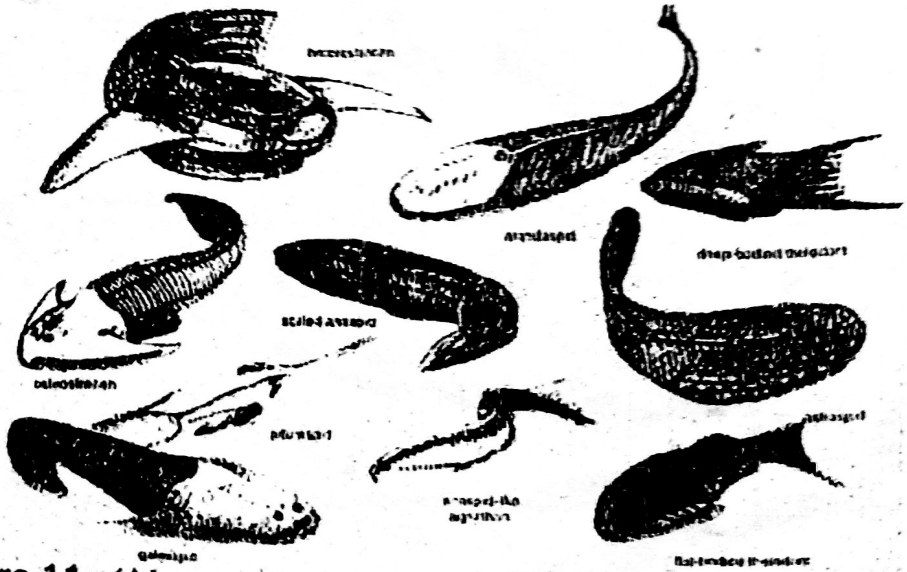


Figure 11: (Above) Various species of fish that can be found in the Salton Sea

The cow bream (*Sarpa salpa*), native in the East Atlantic from the Mediterranean Sea to South Africa, has a maximum size of 51 cm (20 in) and is commonly found near the surface to a depth of around -234 feet (-71.3 m) below sea level[118]. This fish is also known as "the fish that makes dreams" in Arabic and is extremely hallucinogenic[119]. In 2006, two men who apparently ate the fish at a restaurant experienced hallucinations lasting for several days. The other fish hybridized with the Mozambique tilapia, the toothpick fish (*Vandellia cirrhosa*), is somewhat smaller and translucent[120], making it difficult to spot in turbid water. It is a freshwater fish from the Amazon and Orinoco basins of lowland Amazonia[121]. These fish primarily parasitize the gills of larger Amazonian fishes into which they lodge themselves with barbed spines located on their dorsal and ventral sides. The toothpick fish, also known as El Cañero (Spanish: sugarcane knife), finds its host by tracking urea secretions in the murky water in which it lives[122]. In its local environment this species of fish has been known to swim into cavities of humans which it has mistaken for its host species. The most commonly reported human cavity that the Candiru fish is said to invade has been the urethra, though this has been proven to be mere superstition[123]. The only documented case of a Candiru fish invading a human urethra was reported in 1997 CE, though that case is highly dubious[124]. While it would be anatomically impossible for a full grown 16 inch long adult Candiru to enter a human urethra, they have been occasionally reported to invade anal and vaginal canals of human beings, which is medically plausible[125].

The hybrid Tilapia fish (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) of the Salton Sea acquired the least desirable traits of both of these fish. The Salton Sea tilapia population often seeks out the anuses and vaginal canals wading humans to parasitize, but the fish die in the process. This leaves the host with painful erotic hallucinations[126] as the dead fish decays inside of them. Because of this, very few local people swim in the Salton Sea. However, there is a particular group that inhabits the west side of the Chocolate Mountains that use the anally penetrating psychoactive hybrids to initiate new members into their cult[127]. This cult will be discussed in more detail later.

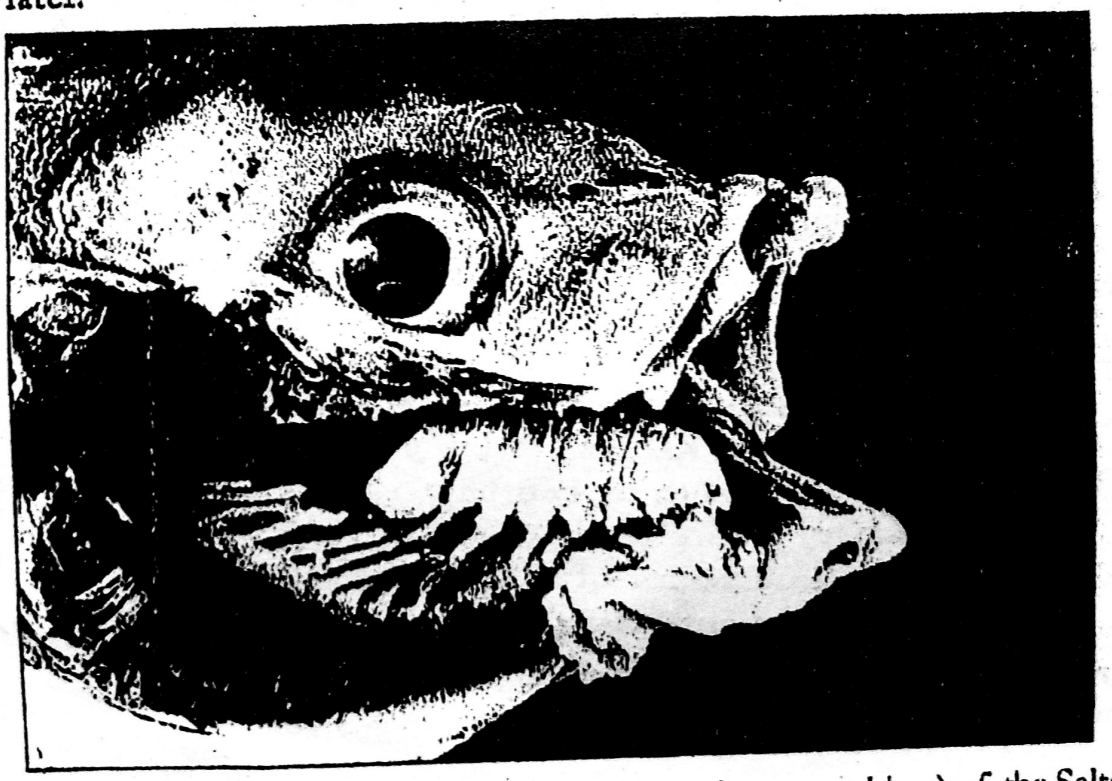


Figure 12: (above) A hybrid tilapia fish (*Oreochromis mossambicus*) of the Salton Sea

In the summer of 1853 CE, American physician, lawyer, naturalist and imperialist freebooter, William Walker[128] traveled across the Bradshaw Trail with a mercenary army while en route to La Paz, Arizona[129]. From La Paz (Spanish: peace) the group passed into Sonora State, and on to La Paz, Baja California Sur, which the group captured and made the capital of "The Republic of Sonora and Baja California" for the next five months[130]. Walker installed himself as president of his territory and put the region under the laws of the American State of Louisiana[131], which made slavery legal and was a major goal of the filibustering expedition. Walker had hoped that his republic would eventually be accepted as a member of the United States[132] just as the Republic of Texas and the Bear Republic of California had been only a few years prior. The campaign was largely funded by selling scripts in San Francisco for land redeemable in this ill-fated new republic[133]. Facing increasing pressure from the Mexican Army, Walker moved his capital three times before he was finally ousted from the country. It was in Cabo San Lucas, the second capital of the Republic of Sonora that Walker met the Hungarian explosives expert[134] and associate of S. F. Baird, John Xantus, who was stationed there as a tidal observer[135]. After a long discussion, Xantus convinced Walker to move his capital once more, further north, to Ensenada, and to burn Cabo San Lucas to the ground[136] lest it fall into enemy hands. This was a technique that Walker would later become known for, most famously in 1856CE with the scorching of Granada, the capital of his self-imposed Nicaraguan dictatorship[137]. Walker was eventually executed by a Honduran flamethrower squad on 12 September, 1860CE for attempting another filibuster in that country.

During their interaction in Cabo San Lucas, William Walker had promised Xantus any position he desired in his new republic[138]. Walker had also given Xantus a book written in the Mormon alphabet which Walker had acquired in San Bernardino but was unable to translate[139]. After the burning of Cabo San Lucas, Xantus easily translated the book, which contained descriptions of various monumental temple complexes dedicated to some forgotten psychopompic lizard deity that the Mormons had been excavating in eastern Nevada[140]. However, hidden in various idiosyncratic word orders and choices, grammatical and typographical errors, repeated phrases, tangential details, improper punctuation and typographical errors, the book contained a cryptographic message intended solely for Xantus[141]. The message instructed him to travel to the Hassayampa River in February of 1890CE for the purpose of collecting specimens. Given that this date was nearly 40 years in the future, Xantus promptly forgot all about it and resumed his research[142]. Most of the month of February 1890CE had passed when news of the Walnut Grove Dam failure reached Hungary where Xantus had recently re-emigrated to serve as the director of the Zoological Garden of Budapest[143]. At first glance the news was disinteresting to Xantus, even though it had been the largest dam failure in Arizona at the time and had caused the largest loss of life in a single engineering catastrophe.

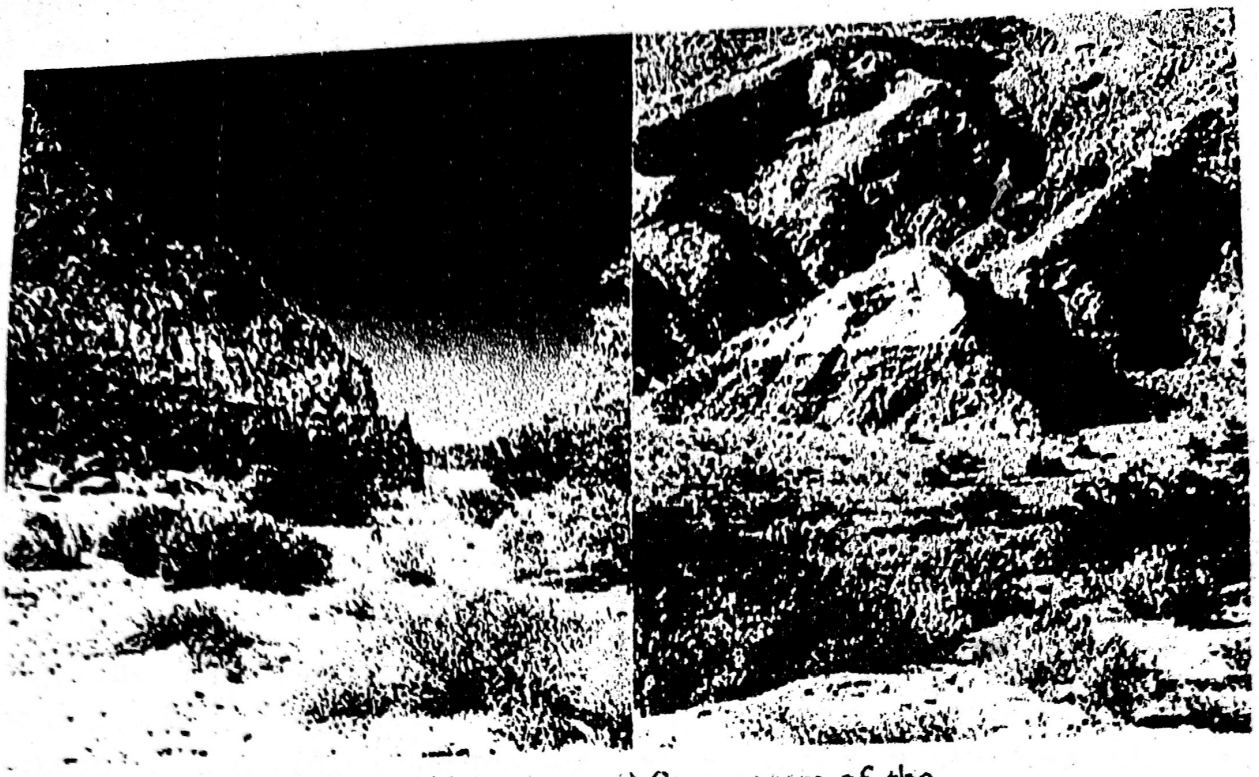


Figure 12: (Above, center) Stereogram of the "Bath Tub Ring" of the LeConte Sea

Figure 14:
(Left) Walker's Theatre of Operations in Nicaragua

Figure 15:
(Below, Right) Page from Xantus' book.Can you decode the message?

In early February, 1890 CE, an unseasonable series of storms had battered the Bradshaw Mountains. The first several storms deposited an unusually deep snow pack. These storms were succeeded by three days of warm cloud bursts which melted the snow resulting in a huge amount of runoff in the Hassayampa River[144]. The lake behind the Walnut Grove Dam rose at the rate of 18 inches an hour, which caused fallen trees to clog the spill way[145]. The wet and cold weather had also caused a sudden surge in the growth of the endolithic lichens that had been steadily eating away at the basement rocks of the dam. Crews attempted to dislodge the trees from the clogged spillway with dynamite, but their attempts were not only unsuccessful, they further sped the growth of the lichen, which feed on human psychic misery. Water began to overtop the dam just after sunset on 20 February, 1890 CE[146]. When the new Superintendant of the dam realized the severity of the situation he activated his emergency plan. The Superintendant called on a certain Dan Burke[147], the dam's blacksmith, and ordered him to ride downstream and warn the people of the imminent disaster. Since Burke had been a part of the Bradshaw Expedition and lived in the area since, he seemed like the best choice for the mission. However, Burke was a drunkard and only got as far down the river as a saloon, where he poured a torrent of Rowland Brand whiskey down his gullet and never completed his task. At 2:06 AM on 21 February, 1890 CE, the dam completely failed.

When water cascaded down the slender box canyon it reached heights of at least 80 feet[148]. Days afterward, uncountable numbers of mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdii*) were found at that height on the canyon wall[149]. This species is found widely, although unevenly, throughout North America, particularly in fast moving streams. One study found that bottom dwelling aquatic insects make up 99.7% of the mottled sculpin's diet, with dipterous larvae and pupae being the most common type found[150]. Sculpin are cannibalistic[151]. Males are known to eat their young if one contracts some kinds of viruses or fungi. The males also eat small females. Therefore older females are typically chosen for mates over younger females. Mottled sculpin reach sexual maturity at the age of two[152]. The breeding season for mottled sculpin is during April and May. At the beginning of the season the males will take refuge under flat-bottomed rocks, waterlogged wood or other rubble found in stream beds. In order to mate the female will approach the male's nest and lay her eggs there[153]. The female chooses her mate based on physical attributes. Since larger males pick out nesting sites with better resources qualities, the female's choice of the largest male indicates she is picking good genes in a mate and also a good environment for her young to grow up[154]. After laying, the male Sculpin will chase off the female from the nest because females are known to cannibalistic towards their own eggs.

Figure 16: (Left)
Desert bighorn sheep
(*Ovis Canadensis nelsoni*)

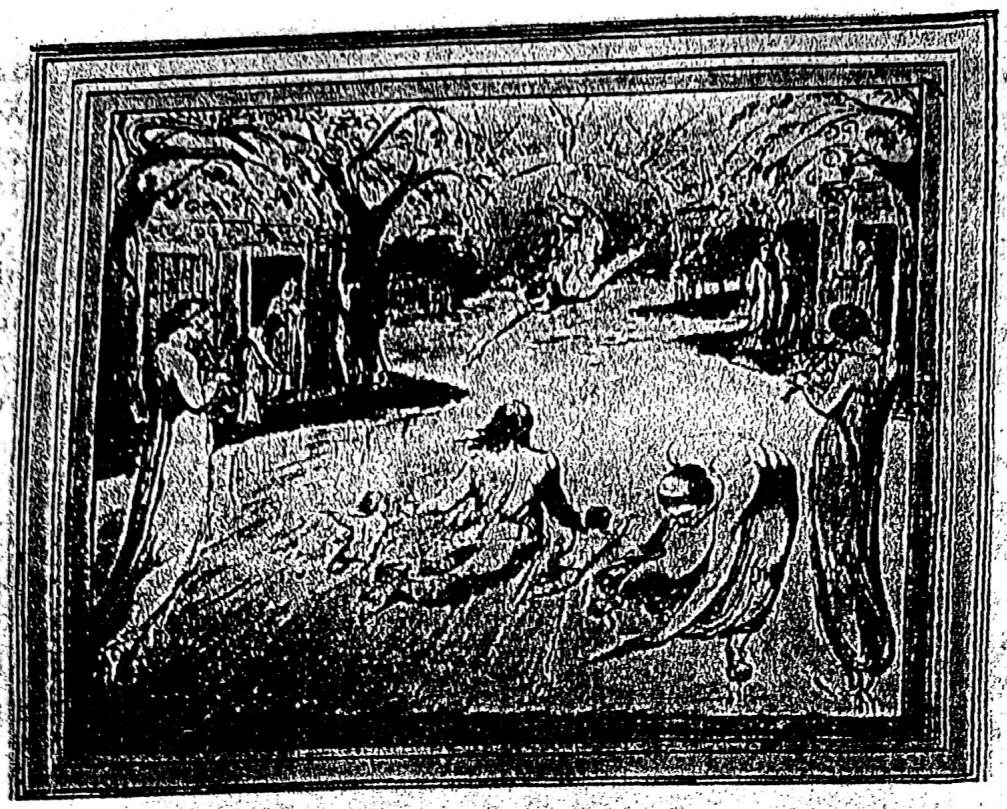
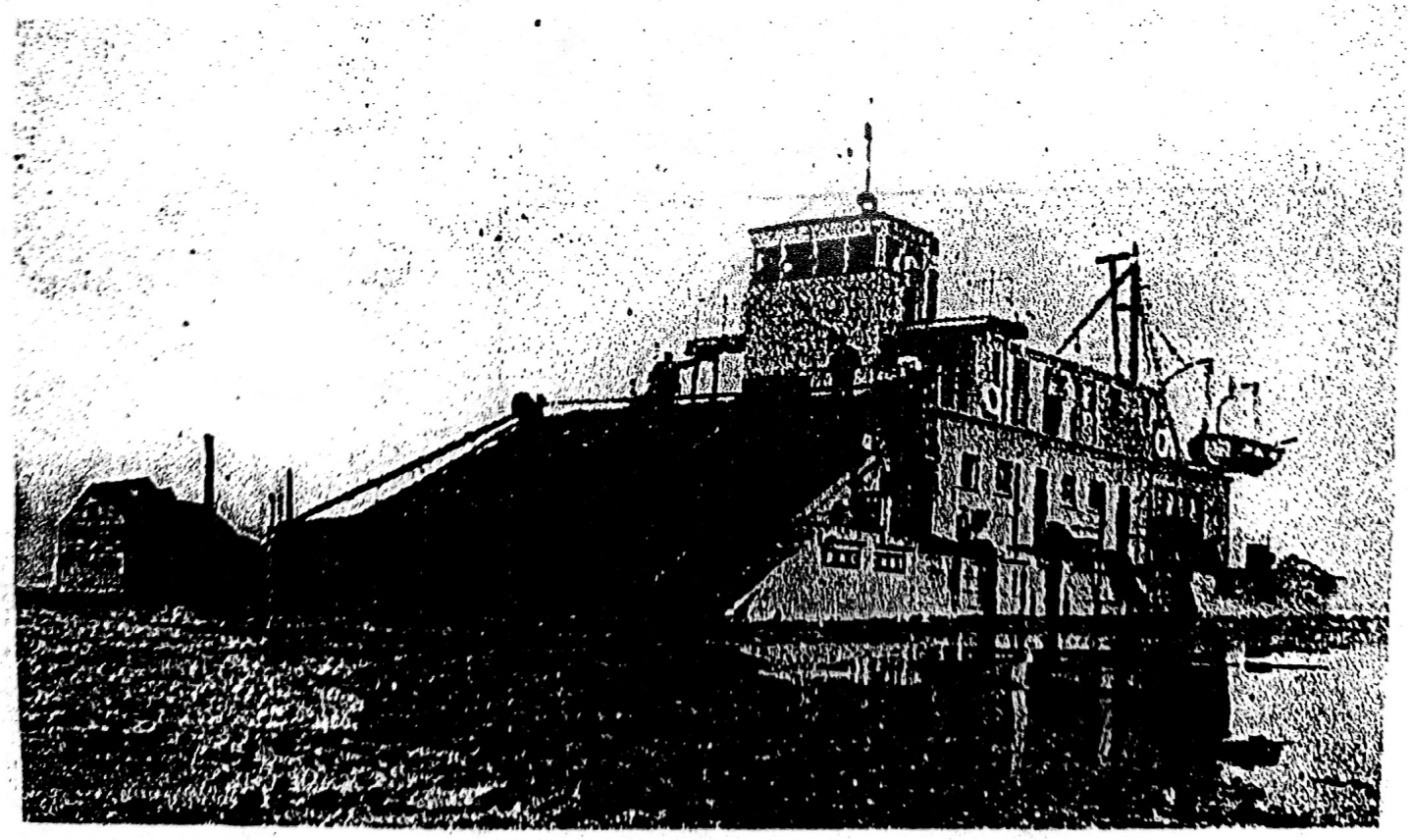


Figure 17: (Above) Blake's etching of the Walnut Grove Dam tragedy

Figure 18: (Below, middle) The machine that formed the Salton Sea. Building in background is the New Liverpool Salt Works



When the torrent of water, stumps, flat-bottomed rocks and fish reached Wickenburg, some 30 miles down stream, it was forty feet tall. Wickenburg had originally been named Pumpkin Patch because the Native Americans had extensively used the area for cultivation prior to white encroachment[155]. The floodplain of Wickenburg had some of the most fertile soil in the state of Arizona and all of it was washed down the Colorado River in the flood. Several crates of gold sitting on loading docks in the La Paz mining district suffered the same fate[156]. 130 people lost their lives that morning. The bodies all floated down the Colorado River to the Sea of Cortez and not a single corpse was ever recovered[157].

Several lawsuits were filed against the owners and operators of the dam in the following years, including criminal charges against William Blake, the designer of the dam[158]. Every legal claim was dismissed. The criminal negligence charges against Blake were also dismissed when he was found not fit to stand trial on the grounds of his Chuckwalla based narcotic stupor[159]. In 1890 Blake did not even know who he was anymore as he sat, catatonic, in a searing hot and rotted shack, bathed in miasmic lizard musk.

It wasn't until Xantus was changing the newspaper at the bottom of the cage of his treasured Cuban ivory-billed woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis bairdii*) in early March of that same year that he saw the names of the dead and missing that he realized that this whole affair was an attempt on his life[160]. Of the 130 dead in the Walnut Grove Dam failure, more than ha lf were distinguished naturalists. John Xantus instantly knew who was behind the scheme. He killed his Cuban ivory-billed woodpecker with a hammer[161]. It was the last of its species.

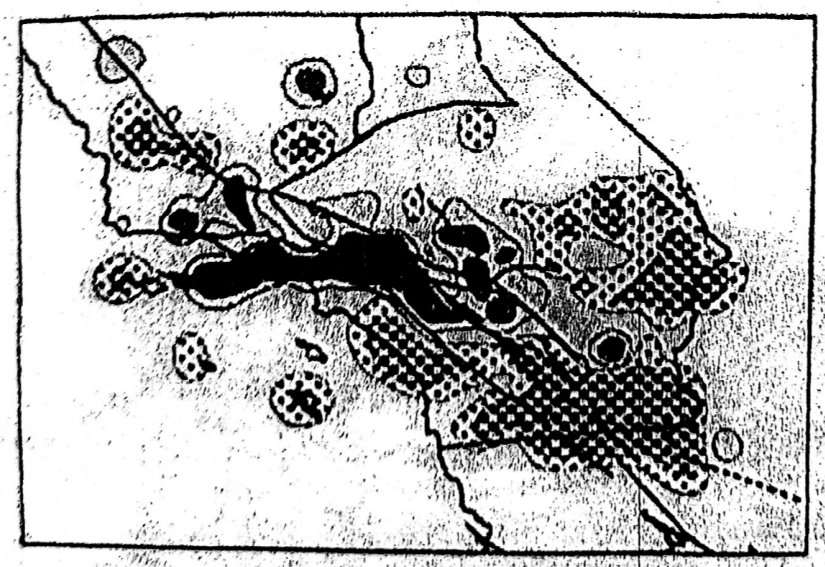


Figure 19: (Left) Map

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